

Under the new automatic dismissal rule, where there are five committee members whose initial inclination is to vote to dismiss the complaint, the likely result will be an automatic dismissal in a month and a half. Even if a complaint does make it to an investigative subcommittee, the right-to-counsel provisions will make it far more likely that the respondent and witnesses will be represented by the same counsel, and thus will have an opportunity to undermine the subcommittee's work by coordinating their testimony.

Approval of the resolution I am introducing will undo the harm done by these provisions of the rules package. Approval of this resolution will also provide a clear and desperately needed signal to our constituents that the House is firmly committed to protecting its reputation and integrity and that the House does intend to have a fair and effective process for considering and acting upon credible allegations of wrongdoing.

Approval of this resolution, Mr. Speaker, is also necessary for one other reason, and that is to affirm the long-standing principle in the House that major changes in the ethics rules and procedures must be made on a bipartisan basis. When the House revisited its ethics rules and procedures in both 1989 and 1997, the work was done through bipartisan task forces that gave thoughtful consideration to proposals from all Members. In contrast, Mr. Speaker, the changes made in the rules package adopted in January were made on a party line vote, with no input whatsoever from anyone in the minority.

Approval of this resolution will be a critical step in restoring the bipartisanship that is essential if there is to be a meaningful ethics process in the House.

OPPOSING THE CENTRAL AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 40 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am joined tonight earlier by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) and the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR), who were here to talk in opposition to the Central American Free Trade Agreement. Tonight I am also joined by a freshman, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MELANCON), who

has already shown himself to be a leader on the Central American Free Trade Agreement and other trade issues, and we will hear from him in a moment.

Twelve years ago, Mr. Speaker, I stood on this floor in opposition to the North American Free Trade Agreement. In those days, we heard promises from supporters of NAFTA, the trade agreement that included Mexico, Canada and the United States, we heard story after story of how this was going to lift up living standards in Mexico, knock down trade barriers between our country and Mexico and our country and Canada and Canada and Mexico, that it would create prosperity for Mexicans and increase jobs in the United States, creating a whole new integrated economy that would be good for all three countries.

I would display a couple of charts that I brought with me tonight to frankly prove that the 12 years of the North American Free Trade Agreement have not served any of our countries well.

I would start, Mr. Speaker, with showing just the overall trade deficit. In 1992, the first year I ran for Congress, we had a trade deficit in this Congress of \$38 billion. That means we actually imported \$38 billion more than we sold outside the United States; \$38 billion.

The last month of 2004, the last month of the year, the trade deficit was almost \$60 billion. It was \$38 billion for the year in 1992; it was almost twice that for a month in December.

But you can see what has happened to our trade deficit. This is zero. If it were zero we would be buying and selling in equal amounts. We have gone from \$38 billion. In 1994, the trade deficit exceeded \$100 billion trade deficit; then \$200 billion in 1999. Then when President Bush came to the White House, it got to \$400 billion. Then it exceeded \$425 billion, then \$500 billion. In this past year, the trade deficit is \$617 billion.

President Bush had told us in those days back when NAFTA was negotiated in the late 1980s and early 1990s that every \$1 billion of trade translated into 19,000 jobs. If you had a trade deficit of \$1 billion, it would cost your country 19,000 generally good-paying industrial jobs.

Now our trade deficit is \$617 billion, and you can see what that means in job loss. If you want to break it down what happened to the trade deficit per country under NAFTA, you can see what happened to the trade deficit with Canada. Back in 1991, the trade deficit was about \$7 or \$8 billion with Canada. Now the trade deficit with Canada alone is about \$62 billion. That is with Canada.

You can look at the trade deficit with Mexico. In fact, we had a trade surplus with Mexico. The numbers above zero mean we actually sold more to Mexico than we bought. Prior to NAFTA, we had a trade surplus with Mexico of a few billion dollars. Then right here is where NAFTA passed.

Look at what happened. It is almost \$20 billion for several years in a row. Then it went to about \$25 billion. Then President Bush came to the White House and it was \$30 billion, then almost \$40 billion, then over \$40 billion, now coming up on \$50 billion. So the trade deficit as a result of NAFTA just grew and grew and grew.

I will show you one more, even though it is not part of the debate and discussion tonight, just because it is the most dramatic of all. This is our bilateral trade deficit as a Nation with China. A dozen years ago it was less than \$20 billion with China. You can just see what happened, year after year after year after year. President Bush took office here, the trade deficit jumped from about \$80 billion to over \$100 billion. Then it was over \$120 billion. Our trade deficit with China last year was over \$160 billion.

Now, would you not think, and I know that the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MELANCON) understands this and other Members on our side of the aisle at least, would you not think when you have this kind of trade deficit, when it looks like this, when the overall U.S. trade deficit has moved this dramatically from just a few billion just a dozen years ago all the way to \$617 billion, would you not think you might want to sort of change ideas and do something different, that you might think this trade policy we have simply is not working?

It is not working for American workers. Whether it is the sugar industry in Louisiana or the steel or auto industry in Ohio or textiles in Georgia and North Carolina, or a whole host of other manufacturers, or whether it is computer programmers in the Silicone Valley, clearly these trade policies are not working. You do not go from a few billion trade deficit to \$617 billion in 12 years without something being wrong.

So what is our answer? President Bush's answer is let us pass the Central American Free Trade Agreement. What the Central American Free Trade Agreement does is it adds Central American countries. And then if Congress passes that, President Bush is negotiating something called Free Trade Area of the Americas, and that will add the rest of Latin America.

That will double the population of NAFTA and quadruple the number of low-income workers under NAFTA. So if you think NAFTA has not worked, where we had that trade deficit with Mexico and Canada, where we had almost a zero trade deficit when NAFTA passed, now Canada and Mexico's trade deficit with us is over \$100 billion, so if we pass CAFTA, the Central American Free Trade Agreement, then the FTAA, Free Trade Area of the Americas, with four times the number of low-income workers, we are going to see more job loss in our Nation, more problems with our economy, more problems in our communities, hollowed-out industrial towns that simply do not have good paying industrial jobs anymore.

Today marks month number 9 since President Bush signed the Central American Free Trade Agreement. He signed it on May 28, 2004. You wonder why he has not brought the trade agreement to Congress to vote on it. With every other trade agreement President Bush has sent to Congress, the Morocco Trade Agreement, he signed it, 37 days later, Congress passed it. The Singapore Trade Agreement, he signed it, 79 days later it passed. The Chile Free Trade Agreement, he signed it, 48 days later it passed. The Australia Trade Agreement, he signed it, 57 days later it passed.

Well, President Bush signed the Central American Free Trade Agreement on May 28 last year. About 280 days ago have elapsed, because President Bush knows there is so much opposition among the American people and so much opposition in this Congress to these continued, failed trade policies. He would have brought it here if he thought he could pass it, but it is pretty clear that an awful lot of Members, including my freshman colleague from Louisiana that is here and so many others, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) and the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) who is joining us in a moment, it is pretty clear these trade policies are not working.

□ 2130

So today marks the end of the ninth month since the President signed the Central American Free Trade Agreement. We are hopeful in this body, many of us, that it never comes to a vote because it is clearly bad trade policy. Instead of passing CAFTA as the President wants, we should instead go back and look at NAFTA, go back and look at our trade policy with China, go back and look at our membership and what we are doing in the World Trade Organization. Instead, President Bush, says, let us move ahead with more trade policy. Even though it may be working for a few investors, it is not working for our families, it is not working for our schools, it is not working for our communities, it is not working for our workers, it is not working for our country.

These kinds of trade deficits, these trade deficits represent lost jobs. They represent disappointment in families. They represent oftentimes divorce and alcoholism, in failed schools, in all the factory closings and lay-offs mean to families, to communities, to our country. And I would hope that President Bush would just decide not to submit the CAFTA to Congress, would instead go back and look at these trade policies and go back and look at these trade agreements, and then make a decision to move in a different direction.

I yield to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MELANCON), a freshman Member who has already done a terrific job in explaining trade issues to his colleagues. He brings a lot of expertise

to the table in trade policy, on creating jobs and making our communities and our schools better.

Mr. MELANCON. Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here tonight. I am here to speak about the CAFTA issue. It is of great concern to me.

I come from the State of Louisiana. That is one of the largest sugar-producing States in this country. During the period of time when the CAFTA was being debated or discussed and negotiated, Mr. Zoellick would go around and tell people in this country that the sugar industry was a dinosaur and that it was not competitive. That was the furthest thing from the truth as possible.

The U.S. sugar industry as well as the Louisiana sugar industry is very competitive by world standards in cost of production, and there are studies and numbers out there that testify to that fact. However, we are sitting here with an agreement that is between ourselves and a number of countries that really does not bring anything to this country.

When you look at the gross product that would be brought by the CAFTA to the United States, it does not exceed the total gross product of the city of Memphis. Now, what is that? That is a political notch on the gun. That is all it is. If you look at the trade agreements that have occurred between the United States and other developed countries, those deals usually are finalized when both parties either walk away unhappy or both parties walk away happy. And what is happening in these trade agreements such as the NAFTA and the CAFTA, the United States is walking away unhappy and the Mexicans and the Central Americans and the Dominican Republic people are walking away happy. Why? Because we are exporting our biggest and cherished thing and that is jobs. We are giving them away. We are turning to a service economy every day.

As the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) pointed out, if you look at the trade deficit that has occurred, those are American jobs going out of this country.

Last year I was in Vancouver, Canada, traveling back into the State of Washington, going to Seattle; and it was amazing to sit at the border and watch the traffic come through the check points. Loaded 18-wheelers, full up coming into the United States. Yet the trailers that were coming back on the 18-wheelers were empty. They were lined up going in. They were few and far between coming out.

What does that tell us? That tells us not only our money is leaving but that our jobs are leaving. We are bringing products in. These products were supposed to be brought to us at cheaper prices. If you really look, and we have had this discussion in the sugar arena, these are manufacturers of products that use sugar as an import.

They do not care if there is an American job one as long as they can get

their product at a cheaper price somewhere out of this country. That is part of what is going on in these trade agreements as these large multinational corporations are the beneficiaries. We continue to give them tax breaks. We continue to give them favoritism, and they continue to export our jobs and move the economy away from a manufacturing economy to a service economy. We have already given away steel. We have already given away the textile industry. The shrimp industry is about gone with the trade deals that this administration and others have imposed on our fishermen.

Sugar is on the chopping block if the CAFTA is passed, and not just Louisiana sugar, the entire United States sugar industry, some 450,000 people across this great land that will lose their jobs.

In Louisiana and primarily in my district, 27,000 jobs will be lost if the sugar industry goes the way of steel and the textile industry; \$2 billion a year in economic impact in the State of Louisiana with gross revenues of approximately \$700 million a year. That in Louisiana is a large, large loss should we lose it.

Louisiana cannot stand it. The United States cannot continue to have this drain on the economy. We talk about a good economy. As I ran in my election, in this last election, I cannot tell you that there is a good economy in Louisiana, especially in the Third District of Louisiana. It does not exist. The sugar people are struggling. The shrimpers are going out of business. The boat people have boats tied up. There is something awfully wrong that is going wrong, gone astray; and I think a lot of it has to do with the trade agreements.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) who has been on this House floor night after night over the years in fighting not just for economic justice but against bad trade agreements and jobs and all that she cares so much about.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his leadership and expertise on this issue. I tried to get his book at a book store near my home, and I could not find it there. So I hope the gentleman will help me find a copy of his book on trade.

The real question is, what is the goal of our recent trade agreement? If it is to export jobs, to increase the trade deficit, to lower the wages of American workers, to fuel the race to the bottom for workers everywhere, to damage the global environment and to benefit multinational corporations that have really no loyalty to the United States, our economy or our workers, then you would rank our trade agreements as a huge success. And if you like NAFTA, then you will love CAFTA.

But what I want to talk about a little bit tonight is the moral dimension of this question. On June 23 and 24, a delegation of six bishops representing the

Catholic Church in Central America came to the United States and met with the bishop secretariat, the chairman of the Domestic and International Policy Committees of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and came up with a statement on CAFTA, and I just want to read a couple of things from that.

Number one, I think it puts it in a context that sometimes we do not think about. Number one, it says according to our pastoral vision, which is inspired by the gospel and the church's social teaching, the human person must be at the center of all economic activity. Free trade agreements, such as CAFTA, should be a way of achieving authentic human development that upholds basic values such as human dignity, solidarity, and subsidiarity. Whether such treatments are ethical or not depends on how these values are pursued.

A second point they made: If trade agreements are shaped by a proper moral perspective, they can promote human development while respecting the environment by fostering closer economic cooperation among and within countries and by raising standards of living especially for the poorest and most abandoned. Human solidarity must accompany economic integration so as to preserve community life, protect families and livelihoods, and defend local cultures.

Then they say, in light of the values and principles that we have outlined, and there were more, as well as the situation of the people, we express some of our specific concerns about the potential impact of CAFTA on our countries, especially in Central America. If I could just for a minute say a couple of those.

One, there has not been sufficient information and debate in our countries, they are talking about the Central American countries, about the various aspects of CAFTA and its impact on our societies. This troubles us deeply given the obvious imbalance in power and influence that exists between the United States and the Central American countries and the impact the agreement will have on our peoples, especially in Central America. This lack of dialoguing consensus regarding the treaty is also leading to growing discontent. In Central America this could lead to violence and other civic unrest which could further hinder true democratic reforms and respect for the rule of law.

They are suggesting that CAFTA, among other things, could lead to violence and other civic unrest.

Number two, they talk about in the area of agriculture that there is insufficient attention given to such sensitive issues as the potential impact of U.S. farm supports on Central American farm producers.

And they talk about, number three, while certain labor and environmental provisions are included in the agreement, it is not clear that the enforce-

ment mechanism within CAFTA will lead to stronger protection of fundamental worker rights and the environment.

We are talking about leaders of the Catholic Church in Central America and in the United States who beg us to think about the impact on ordinary people in their countries, in our country, and the moral dimension that has to be considered when we look at important U.S. policy decisions like this. And I think that they have raised very, very important questions that deserve our great attention.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for letting me read some of this.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY). The gentlewoman talks about the moral values behind, or the lack of moral values behind, our trade policy, or the wrong kind of moral values. I think about that we have this trade policy in this country now that it is sort of every man, and I say man, every-man-for-himself trade policy, what can the wealthiest corporations get out of these trade deals, forgetting the workers, forgetting our communities.

Instead of this every-man-for-himself trade policy, we need to understand we are all in this together, and when we have this kind of job loss as those bishops in Central America understand what it means to their communities and where they are the losers, these trade agreements also have obviously caused great hardship in our country. When a factory closes in North Carolina, a textile plant or a steel mill closes in Ohio, or a chemical plant closes in New Jersey, what does that mean to those families and what does that mean to those schools and what does it mean to those children putting pressures on those families because their parents are unemployed and cannot find work and their schools are underfunded and all of that?

When the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) talks about the moral values underpinning our trade policy, what it does to Mexican or Guatemalan workers who have no real labor standards for fair play in the workplace, what it does to our workers, what it does to sugar workers in Louisiana, it is pretty clear this policy really lacks the traditional moral values that I think built our country and still make us the great country that we are.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) and thank him for his outstanding work on job creation and trade.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) for all that he does on this trade issue and is constantly being out there pointing out the shortcomings of all these free trade agreements that this administration, the Bush administration, continues to put before the Congress.

I have to say, I just do not get it. I do not understand how this administra-

tion, the Bush administration, continues to push these free trade agreements when there is absolutely no question in my mind and I think most Americans minds that they have been a failure.

Our economy continues to be stagnant. We continue to have plants close. I use in my own district the Frigidaire plant in Edison, the Ford plant in Edison. I could go on and on with the plants that continue to close. We see the continual loss of jobs. We see unemployment at levels that are unacceptable. And there is absolutely no indication that this administration's policy with these continual free trade agreements is accomplishing anything for the people of this country.

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) puts up the chart with the overall U.S. trade deficit which continues to grow worse and every day we see the trade deficit getting worse; and yet at the same time we see the administration coming forward with more of these free trade agreements, in this case for Central America.

□ 2145

I just have to say I just do not get it. I remember when NAFTA was first proposed going back a few years. The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) and I were both here at the time, and we at the time said over and over again that NAFTA was not acceptable, it was not going to do anything to improve the job situation and the economy of the United States, and it was not likely to do anything to improve the wages or the job conditions of Mexican workers, and that is still true.

Anyone who goes to Mexico knows that it has not improved the standard of living for Mexican workers, and at the same time, it has simply drained away valuable jobs from the United States.

This continues to be the case with every one of these agreements. They are not protective of labor and environmental standards. I do not know how many times the administration has come forth and said, well, there is not a problem here because we are going to protect workers in the countries that we would have the free trade agreements with; that we are going to have adequate environmental enforcement. It is simply not true.

I just have some information here that was put out relative to the International Labor Organization. It says, without exception, the national labor systems of the Central American countries fail to meet international standards on freedom of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively.

The ILO, the International Labor Organization, the State Department and independent human rights observers have documented the following examples of the systematic failure to enforce labor laws throughout the Central American region.

Four points. First, delays and obstructions are common in Central

American labor ministries. Second, labor ministries not only ignore violations, but are, themselves, complicit in violations of the law in most of these Central American countries. Collusion between labor ministry officials and employers to deny workers their right to organize is a problem. Finally, the judicial branch, the courts, are guilty of systematic enforcement failures in Central America.

We know that there is not going to be adequate protection with regard to labor in these countries. There is not going to be adequate protection in terms of environmental law and environmental standards, and yet we continue to move forward, and it makes absolutely no sense because the economy is stagnant, the trade deficit gets higher and the labor and environmental laws are not being enforced.

So, for the life of me, I do not understand how we continue with these. Again, I have never said that increasing free trade between the United States and other countries is, *per se*, a bad thing, but this administration has never negotiated, or I should say, rarely has negotiated any trade agreement that is helpful to the United States, and that is what we face here once again.

I do not support it. I hope we can get as many people as possible to understand that we cannot continue this downhill trend. I thank the gentleman from Ohio for all that he does on this subject.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) for joining us tonight.

When we look at the trade deficit, as the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) mentioned, and the gentleman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MELANCON) mentioned, from \$38 billion, at least the first year I ran for Congress a dozen years or so ago, up to \$617 billion and growing, it was only \$500 in 2003. Last year it was over \$600, \$617 billion.

When you look at that and you couple it with this profligate spending, tax cuts all that has happened to bring about a \$400 billion budget deficit, our trade deficit and our budget deficit, \$600-plus billion, \$400-plus billion add up to over \$1 trillion a year, and most of that money is borrowed from other Nations, whether it is South Korean banks or whether it is the government/Communist Party/interest groups in China or whether it is Japan, banks in Japan or corporations or individuals are borrowing so much, they are buying a piece of the United States every time.

When we run up a trade deficit of \$617 billion, we run up a budget deficit of \$400 billion, we are selling off our country piece by piece. At the same time, the workers in these other countries are not benefitting, only investors are.

When we come to the House floor and we criticize, if we come criticize CAFTA and NAFTA, we also need to

offer something affirmative and positive, and this Congress 5 years ago passed something called the Jordan Free Trade Agreement, not a very large country in terms of distance in miles from here, and not a major economic player in the world, but it was a trade agreement that really lifted up standards. It lifted up workers and environmental standards and was a prototype for what we should be doing.

If the Central American Free Trade Agreement had been written the way the Jordan Free Trade Agreement had, we would be on the floor supporting it, as we all supported the Jordan Free Trade Agreement, but instead, after the Clinton administration negotiated the Jordan Free Trade Agreement, we have gone back to this failed NAFTA model. It is all about investment. It is all about every man for himself trade policy where workers are hurt, communities are hurt, schools are hurt, families are hurt. Investors may make money, but they are the only ones that do, and if any of us who have gone to the border and seen the way that the trade works for families on both sides of the border, how it has worked in a way that environmentally has been a disaster.

The American Medical Association said the most toxic place in the Western hemisphere is along the Mexican-U.S. border on both sides where babies are born with all kinds of defects, where children get sick, where old people cannot breathe well, if they have any kind of bronchial problems. These trade agreements, they are hurting our communities and our jobs and our companies. They are simply the wrong direction and simply no reason we could not pass something like the Jordan trade agreement instead of going in this direction.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY).

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman was talking about how there are winners and losers, actually a very narrow band of winners with our trade policy, mostly the investors and the multinational corporations, but I notice that because of an inquiry that the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) had made, that it was found that public dollars from the Agency for International Development, the USAID office were used to promote the President's trade policy, as I understand it, in violation of Federal and USAID lobbying restrictions, that a \$700,000 taxpayer funded grant was actually given to business groups to promote CAFTA in violation of the regulations.

I think that when there is a policy debate for the administration to unfairly use these taxpayer dollars to propagandize, to fund outside organizations, business organizations who stand to gain from the outcome, is really improper, if not illegal activities, and I really want to congratulate the gentleman for looking into this, because the taxpayers deserve a right to know.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. I thank the gentlewoman for her work on education and health care.

This has become a pattern in the administration where they paid Armstrong Williams, a commentator, I think a couple of hundred thousand dollars to use his position as a media commentator, never disclosed it, but used his position as a media commentator to lobby on the President's behalf on education issues.

They have done the same on health care issues. They set up all kinds of Social Security using taxpayer dollars lobbying for the President's radical privatization of Social Security, and now they actually gave a \$700,000 grant, USAID, to business groups in Central America to lobby the government. Imagine that.

If our friends want to come to the House floor to debate this tonight and any other time, we are very willing. We are in front of the American public. There are cameras if people want to watch this at home to have this debate in public, but to use taxpayer dollars to lobby foreign governments or our own government or to convince the American people to do something is just immoral.

I think when we look at sort of the values of all of this and the moral questions involved in trade where the elite, the wealthiest people in the world do very well and nobody else much does, and how that is such a betrayal of our moral values as a Nation and then you use taxpayer dollars to undercut that even further, it is just reprehensible, and I would hope President Bush would speak out and say never again will this happen, anybody that ever does anything like this loses his job or her job, no questions asked. I hope the President would speak his own moral values and say this is the wrong thing to do. He has remained silent and continued to do this.

We caught them again, if you will. Who knows how many more times they are going to try to use tax dollars to push this very unpopular agreement through this Congress.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to ask a question, maybe my colleague does not know the answer to this, but when the Office of the Inspector General finds this kind of breach of the regulations and the rules, what happens? I mean is this, you were wrong to do this, does nothing happen?

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, they said do not do this anymore; we will quit doing it. Nobody paid a fine. Nobody was penalized. Nobody lost a job. That is just amazing. It is like you break the law and do something untoward and just do not do it again, please, even though 700,000 American taxpayer dollars were flushed down the toilet. It is pretty amazing. It is not exactly law, and I yield to my friend from Louisiana.

Mr. MELANCON. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman speaks of moral issues. If you have ever been to Central America

and if you have ever been in a sugar cane field where a 4- and a 5- and a 6-year-old kid is covered with soot and has a cane knife in his hand that is as big as him, but he needs to be there because it is income for the family, where the average family 4 years ago was earning \$275 a year, and look, that is not right. That is morally wrong, but there is a need in that country. We ought to be helping that country, but we should not be giving them every job in America.

The gentleman spoke earlier about fast track, trade promotion authority. In the previous administration, the Congress did not want to give that authority, but it has given it in recent administrations, but it is not fast track as it was purported to be. It is actually slow track.

As the gentleman indicated, there were several agreements, there were the Jordan agreement and others that were negotiated, signed, brought to the public for public display and comment and then brought for a vote in the Congress. If, in fact, we are going to do something, let us be consistent and let us be consistent all the way across the board.

What has happened with the CAFTA is that the multinational corporations and this administration know right now they do not have the votes, and I have been in this city when it gins up over an issue, and it scares me to death to think that we are going to be selling America down the road if we pass this CAFTA.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman from Louisiana's (Mr. MELANCON) comments, especially what happens when these trade agreements get real close to the date of the vote.

I remember during the China trade agreement that when that came to this Congress, a friend told me there were more corporate jets at National Airport than any other time they would have ever seen. There were corporate leaders that were walking the halls of this Congress telling people they wanted access, telling the Members of Congress they wanted access to 1 billion Chinese customers when, in fact, they really wanted access to 1 billion Chinese workers of all ages, of both genders, of all kinds of people that were going to work at a few cents an hour, in some cases, almost slave labor, too often child laborers, and always underpaid workers, and this is really what these trade agreements are all about. It is pretty clear.

He talks about the immoral value of children in the sugar cane fields, and I have seen the same in coffee fields in Nicaragua, and I have seen the same on the Mexican border where workers are badly treated, underpaid, and as a result, we are not getting what the whole point of trade agreements is which is to lift workers up in other countries so they can then buy American products. We create a middle class in Mexico, we create a middle class in Honduras, and

then they buy from our workers and our companies back and forth, and that simply does not happen in these trade agreements because it is all about low income workers.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to read one of the statements of the bishops that I think sums up what the gentleman has been saying.

The moral measure of any trade agreement should be how it affects the lives and dignities of poor families and vulnerable workers whose voices should receive special attention in this discussion.

□ 2200

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for that. I will close with those very appropriate comments. Thank the gentlewoman from Illinois. Thank our new freshman colleague, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MELANCON), thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE), and also the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) and the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) for their leadership in opposition to the Central American Free Trade Agreement, and for everyone here in pointing out what has happened to our trade policy and how clearly when you go from a \$38 billion trade deficit to \$617 billion in a dozen years that this is not working. We need to strike out in a new direction.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I join with many of my colleagues today in expressing my opposition to the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

United States trade policy must put American workers first. I voted against and have been a vigorous critic of NAFTA, and I am concerned about efforts to further expand this bad policy through CAFTA or other harmful free trade agreements. NAFTA has been terrible for American workers, because it encourages corporations to abandon the United States to exploit weak labor and environmental standards in other countries. CAFTA will only further this destructive behavior.

Of vital importance for stopping CAFTA is ensuring that the domestic sugar industry is not being severely damaged or destroyed. Stopping CAFTA could help prevent the loss of hundreds of thousands of U.S. jobs and family farms in sugar producing states across the country. My home state of Michigan is the 4th largest producer of sugar beets in the nation. We have roughly 2,100 sugar beet farmers producing more than 3 million tons of sugar beets. The Michigan sugar industry supports 5,000 jobs and generates an estimated \$500 million of economic activity. Michigan's Saginaw Valley and Thumb area produce more than 90 percent of the sugar beets grown east of the Mississippi River. The Michigan Sugar Company plant located in Caro in my Congressional District, has roughly 350 year-around and 1,000 seasonal employees.

CAFTA will flood U.S. markets with foreign sugar and we should not be using this industry as a bargaining chip during trade negotiations. Our sugar program provides the only effective way of dealing with the unfair predatory trade practices in the world dump market for sugar. Without it, the U.S. sugar program cannot be

sustained and the domestic industry will certainly collapse. CAFTA unfortunately undermines this important program.

The United States is a world leader, and we must enter into trade agreements that encourage positive standards and quality of life for both the United States and foreign nations. Otherwise, corporations will be allowed to exploit foreign workers while abandoning American workers, who are the most productive in the world. I will not support any trade agreement like CAFTA that continues the United States down this misguided path.

SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity, and also Democratic Leader PELOSI, for one more hour, one more week for the Democratic 30-something Working Group.

As you know, over a period of time, from the 108th Congress now to the 109th Congress, we have been coming to the floor sharing information, not only with Members of the House and the other body, but also with the present administration in the White House and with the American people about what is happening for America and what is happening to America.

I must say that it is discouraging to hear some of the things that are coming from the majority side and also coming mainly from the White House on Social Security. And we come to the floor week after week to give voice to those Americans that are educating themselves through the survivor benefits, through Social Security, and also those Americans that are 20, 30, 40, and 50-something that are looking for Social Security to be there for them when they retire; and to make sure that they can get the maximum benefit, especially for those that are in their 50s and 40s, as they start to think about retirement, making sure that Social Security is there for them when they are eligible.

I must say that during the break, as you know, we were on the Presidents' break for some time. And many House Democrats, and some enlightened Republicans, I must add, went back home and started asking their constituents how they felt about Social Security. And many of them came back with positive responses. In fact, they want the maximum benefits out of Social Security, and they want to make sure that it is not privatized. And that was overwhelmingly the message during the Presidents' break. It is not what I am saying; it is what the press reports are saying, either via print or TV media.

And the House Democrats have been out in America and united about opposing the privatization, in opposition to the privatization of Social Security. And over the past 2 weeks, 160 House